

ENGLISH FOLK SONG SUITE (1923)

RALPH VAUGHAN WILLIAMS

(1872-1958)



COMPOSER

Ralph Vaughan Williams was born in 1872 in Down Ampney, Gloucestershire, England and died in London in 1958. In his youth he studied violin and piano, staying with the piano as an adults. He attended several schools including the Royal College of Music where he studied composition and conducting. He would later continue his composition studies with Max Bruch in Berlin and Maurice Ravel in Paris. He was acknowledged as Britain's leading composer after the death of Sir Edward Elgar, and was the leader of the 20th Century English national school. Throughout his career he collected over 800 folk songs and incorporated them into his compositions. He traveled extensively throughout the English countryside collecting folksongs and carols, notating melodies that had been past down aurally for generations. His first published work was the song *Linden Lea* in 1902 which used ideas gained from his studies of English folk songs. Vaughan Williams composed for both band and orchestra, and other notable works include nine orchestra symphonies, *Variations on 'Dives and Lazarus'*, *Tuba Concerto*, *Toccata Marziale*, *Variations on a Theme by Thomas Tallis*, and *Flourish for Wind Band*.

During the First World War, Vaughan Williams volunteers to serve in the Field Ambulance Service and was deeply affected by the carnage and the loss of many close friends. Following his military service, he focused his life entirely in music. He would become professor of composition at the Royal College of Music and serve as director of Leith Hill Music Festival.

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Published in 1924 for military band, *English Folk Song Suite* was Vaughan Williams' first composition for wind band. Along with Gustav Holst's *First Suite in E-flat* and *Second Suite in F*, it was one of the first pieces of the 20th Century composed specifically for wind band. The work consists of three movements (March- Seventeen Come Sunday, Intermezzo- My Bonny Boy, and March- Folk Songs from Somerest) and originally had a fourth movement- Sea Songs, which was removed by Vaughan Williams and published separately. There are multiple folk songs in each of the movements, with a total of nine folk songs used in the composition.

FOLK SONGS

Vaughan Williams's use of folk music materials can be attributed to his nearly life-long interest and research in English folk songs. Folk songs can be found in many of his other works from this period, as Nationalism in music flourished during the years between the two world wars. The nine folk songs used in *English Folk Song Suite* are:

I. March- "Seventeen Come Sunday"

- I'm Seventeen Come Sunday
- Pretty Caroline
- Dives and Lazarus

II. Intermezzo- "My Bonny Boy"

- My Bonny Boy
- Green Bushes

III. March- "Folk Songs from Somerest"

- Blow Away the Morning Dew
- High Germany
- The Tree So High
- John Barleycorn

ASSIGNMENT: Mark in your music, where each Folk song occurs.

Due:

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Listen to the recording and use your sheet music as a reference, to answer the following questions:

1. How many different folk tunes are in each movement and what are their names?

-March "Seventeen come Sunday" _____

-Intermezzo "My Bonny Boy" _____

-March "Folk Songs From Somerset" _____

2. Describe the various mood contrasts within each movement. Include Measure numbers and use 2 or 3 adjectives to describe each mood. How does your individual part contribute to each of these moods?

3. Do you play the melody, countermelodies, accompaniment, the driving pulse, accenting material, etc.?

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LISTENING/FORM ASSIGNMENT

While listening to a recording of *English Folk Song Suite*, complete the form table below. Be sure to have a copy of your music in front of you as you complete this assignment, much of the information will be there!

Movement One- March: I'm Seventeen Come Sunday

Measure Numbers	Section/Folk Song	Tonal Center/Mode	Scoring
m. 1-4	Introduction	F dorian	full band plays intro, decrescendo into measure 5
	A Seventeen Come Sunday	F dorian	
m. 31-32	Transition		bass plays downbeats, woodwinds play upbeats, key and style changes
	C Dives and Lazarus		Trio section, melody in low brass, woodwinds have 6/8 pattern
		g minor	
m. 1-4	Transition		repeat of introduction
	A Seventeen Come Sunday		
	Coda		

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Movement Two- Intermezzo: My Bonny Boy

Measure Numbers	Section/Folk Song	Tonal Center/ Mode	Scoring
m. 1-2	Introduction	F dorian	F minor chord
m. 3-42			Oboe/Cornet solo. Melody restated in low brass and woodwinds, clarinet solo
	B Green Bushes		
m. 78-97			

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Movement Three- March: Folk Songs of Somerset

Measure Numbers	Section/Folk Song	Tonal Center/ Mode	Scoring
m. 1-4	Introduction	B-flat Major	Introduction, staccato.
m. 5-28	A Morning Dew		Cornet solo, band accompanies
m. 29-44	A High Germany		
m.69-70	Transition		
		C Aeolian	
m. 89-112			
	Transition		Repeat of introduction
		G Aeolian	Low brass plays High Germany
m.45-68	A Morning Dew (restated)		

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LEARNING GOALS

By the end of the unit you should be able to:

1. Prepare and perform your part of English Folk Song Suite with note and rhythmic accuracy, appropriate dynamics, phrasing, and style.
2. Provide background information about English Folk Song Suite, Ralph Vaughan Williams, and the style period (including Nationalism).
3. Construct, identify by ear and play on your instrument three intervals (major 3rd, minor 3rd, perfect 5th), two triads (major and minor), and three scale types (major, aeolian/natural minor, dorian mode).
4. Examine Arch and Ternary musical forms including compositional techniques of polymeter and Picardy third.
5. Find two American folk songs, edit melodies for your instrument, and employ Ternary form. Be able to perform the complete edition on your instrument.
6. Define any of the terms listed in the Glossary of Terms.

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FORM

Similar to architects designing a new building, composers develop a framework or formal plan for a piece of music. The overall structure of a composition is called musical form, and it describes the layout of a piece of music including smaller sections within a larger work. The smaller sections of a composition are assigned a capital letter to designate new or similar material. For example, the first melody/section is given a letter "A" and the second section is assigned letter "B." If the first melody returns in the music, the letter "A" is used again to indicate the return of similar material.

Ralph Vaughan Williams incorporated three different musical forms for each of the three movements in English Folk Song Suite. It is possible to determine the musical form of English Folk Song Suite because each section in the music presents a different folk song.

Movement 1- March: Seventeen Come Sunday

Arch Form- A B C B A

A- I'm Seventeen Come Sunday

B- Pretty Caroline

C- Dives and Lazarus

Movement 2- Intermezzo: My Bonny Boy

Ternary Form- A B A

A- My Bonnie, Bonnie Boy

B- Green Bushes

Movement 3- March: Folk Songs from Somerset

Ternary Form- A B A

A- Blow Away the Morning Dew & High Germany

B- The Tree So High & John Barleycorn

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GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Da Capo An Italian musical term that means from the beginning. Composers usually abbreviate a *da capo* in music with a D.C. and then add a second instruction in Italian either *al Fine* or *al Coda*. *D.C. al Fine* instructs players to play *from the beginning* of the piece (movement) and play until the *end* (or *Fine* indication). *D.C. al Coda* asks players to play *from the beginning* and then jump to the *Coda* when indicated.

Folk Song Music that is transmitted through an oral (sung) tradition within the culture. The composers are usually not known, and the music is often related to historical or personal events.

Form Musical form describes the overall structure or layout of a composition. Similar to architects designing a new building, composers develop framework or formal plan for a piece of music.

Mode Musical scales that have their own unique arrangements of whole steps and half steps. Modes are rooted in the music of early historical periods.

Nationalism A musical movement that is characterized by an emphasis on musical elements of one's region, country or ethnicity. Composers that write in the *Nationalistic* style incorporate folk songs, dances and/or rhythms native to the region. Frederic Chopin is arguably regarded as the first composer to use *Nationalistic* elements beginning in the 19th century.

Polymeter Using two time signatures simultaneously.

Theme Musical material (usually a melody) that is used to build the entire composition.

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Abbreviations from the score: Use a music dictionary to define any abbreviations that you do not know.

a2

pizz.

alla pizz.

rit.

dim.

sim.

marc.

stacc.

Terms from the score: Use a music dictionary to define any terms that you do not know.

allegro

poco allegro

andantino

scherzando

cantabile

sempre

fine

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CREATIVE PROJECT

Folk Song Research and Formal Musical Structure

This assignment is in three parts (each with different due dates):

1. Research two American folk songs that can be edited for your instrument. Research means to find, write down on manuscript paper (staff paper), and document the source of the tune (where you found it).

DUE DATE: Friday, Oct 2

2. Edit the folk songs so that they are playable by you on your instrument. Transpose the tune (if necessary) and indicate the tempo, dynamics, articulation and phrasings. If necessary, you may change the clef. Ask your instructor for help if you need it.

DUE DATE: Friday, Oct 16

3. Place the two folk songs in *Ternary* form and consider changing musical elements to create contrast between the A and B sections. (*NOTE- most composers change tempo or style between the A and B sections of a piece. Composers may also alter the key center to designate additional contrast and interest.*)

DUE DATE: Friday, Oct 30

Final submission: hand Mrs. Collins your Ternary Form arrangement and submit a recording and/or video of you performing the composition by the 10/30 deadline.